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ABSTRACT

Focusing on the importance of helping students to be aware of diverse viewpoints and customs, and to understand their own cultural heritage, this paper discusses how multicultural awareness is addressed in an introductory literature class and a composition class. The paper's first section introduces the basic elements in multicultural education, discussing some of the myths about the American melting pot and presenting some statistics on immigration in the United States and on numbers of foreign students. The paper's second section, "Multicultural Approach in Introductory Literature Classes," discusses the international focus of an Introduction to Fiction class conducted at Weber State University, in Ogden, Utah. The third section, "Multicultural Approach in English 111 College Writing Classes," describes a particular unit used in an introductory college writing class taught at the same institution. A conclusion presents observations on the importance of multicultural awareness. (SR)

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Reconsidering the Melting Pot:
Fostering Multicultural Awareness Through
Introductory Composition and Literature Courses

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Background Explanation

This paper is a copy of a speech delivered at Weber State University in March, 1991 as part of a series of faculty symposia on gender and multicultural awareness. The original presentation included overhead transparencies, a display of sample texts, a question and answer period, and informal interaction between the audience and the speakers. You will note the personal references in the written copy of the speech. These reflect the informal nature of the original presentation.

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I. Introduction

About two weeks before Christmas I spent some time teaching a series of classes on multicultural education with Linda Oda from the Department of Teacher Education. The students were student teachers who were a part of a Hemingway Grant pilot program. As so often is the case in our business, the truly brilliant and memorable comments did not come from me or Linda--although I suspect Linda's brilliance far exceeded my own--but from one of our student teachers, Sarah Larsen. She said, "A myth is a short cut to thinking, a stereotype is a short cut to getting to know me." Those of us present that day agreed that Sarah's comment could serve as a point of familiarity in the introduction of multicultural awareness, not only to junior and senior high school students, but to college students as well. Most students have studied mythology--albeit, generally Greek rather than Zulu, Mayan, Cambodian, Persian, or Hebrew--but they have a general concept of myths, their purposes, uses and our modern day association with them. They are also well aware of the limiting power of stereotypes and may even have participated in stereotyping activities, either as a perpetrator or as a victim. Indeed, most adults have memories of situations in which they were judged by their gender, religion, style of dress, or choice of friends. But the key word in Sarah's remark was probably the word "me" which she used when she said "a stereotype is a shortcut to getting to know me." This is the most basic concept in developing multicultural awareness. Suzuki writes in

his article in Integrated Education "each person must be aware of and secure in his own identity, and be willing to extend to others the same respect and rights that he expects to enjoy himself" (45). This is perhaps one of the most important goals Priti Kumar and I have in addressing multicultural awareness in our introductory literature and composition classes. We believe that not only is it important for our students to be aware of diverse viewpoints and customs, but to understand their own cultural heritage. Indeed, we cannot begin to understand others until we understand ourselves: our prejudices, values, cultural customs, ethnic backgrounds, and reactions to others who are different. We cannot take shortcuts to getting to know "me."

Today I am going to introduce the basic elements in multicultural education. Then I will turn the presentation over to Priti who will discuss the international focus of her HU 232 class--Introduction to Fiction. I will follow with an explanation of a particular unit I use in my English 111 class, College Writing. Priti will conclude our presentation and we will be happy to answer questions at the end. Now I am going to discuss some of the myths about the American melting pot and present some statistics on immigration nation-wide and numbers of foreign students here at Weber State.

My interest for exotic and unusual lands and customs started with a childhood interest in China. It was probably sparked by my parents' love for Chinese food, a kindly restaurant owner who taught me to eat with chopsticks at the age of 8, my fascination

with a children's book about a Chinese girl named Mei Li, and the fact that my small Presbyterian church in Portland, Oregon merged with two other equally small congregations, one of which was a Chinese church previously sponsored by the mission board. The associate minister would hold services in Chinese in the chapel while the English service was going on in the sanctuary. About once a month the services were joined and translations were done from English to Chinese and visa versa. By the time I was 12 I could recite nearly the entire baptism service in Cantonese. Unfortunately I can now only muster a few stumbling syllables.

When I left the States to teach overseas I found adjustment to be quite easy--not because I wasn't without my own particular prejudices but because I was fascinated by what I saw. That was when I learned that provincialism was not a specialty of Americans, nor was stereotyping a uniquely American trait. Sometimes I was expected to behave in certain ways simply because I was an American or more specifically, because I was an American woman. I was forced to examine my own beliefs, values, and those of the people around me. I also decided that maybe the melting pot I had been taught about wasn't really such an admirable concept to emulate after all. I certainly didn't want to become Iranian just because I was living in Iran or Haitian just because I was living in Haiti. I wanted to maintain my identity and to adopt those customs I found valuable, interesting, and sensible even though I recognized my responsibility and obligation as a resident to follow the social and legal customs of the country.

And afterall, because of my appearance I wasn't completely "meltable" in the eyes of my Iranian or Haitian friends anyway, nor did they want me to be. Shouldn't I, I reasoned, celebrate our differences and at the same time recognize and appreciate our similarities?

The concept of the melting pot is often taken to be a fact when it is actually a fictional concept first found in a play of the same name written in 1909 by Israel Zangwell. One of the characters, a Russian-Jewish immigrant says, "America is God's Crucible, the great Melting Pot, where all races of Europe are melting and reforming! Here you stand, good folk, think I, when I see them at Ellis Island, here you stand in your fifty groups with your fifty languages and histories, and your fifty hatreds and rivalries, but you won't be long like that, brothers, for these are the fires of God. A fig for your feuds and vendettas! Germans and Frenchmen, Irishmen and Englishmen, Jews and Russians--into the Crucible with you all! God is making the American.... The real American has not yet arrived, He is only in the Crucible, I tell you--he will be the fusion of all races, the coming superman." This assimilationist view of Americanization supports the belief that becoming an American means leaving behind the customs and traditions of one's original culture. We have probably all heard stories of immigrants who, upon arrival in America, refused to allow their children to speak the "language of the old country" (37). Perhaps the two oldest children were sent to school during the day and then came home to

teach English to the rest of the family at night. Such a situation existed in my own family in the early years of this century. Vigorous attempts were often made to remove any traces of the old customs and to take on the new culture.

Unfortunately, there were plenty of groups who never joined the melting pot. Their color or the shape of their eyes made them "unmeltable." They didn't look like the stereotypical American. Our tendency, when thinking of racial or cultural diversity, is to look at easily identifiable groups already living in America-- Native Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Black Americans. These have been the "unmeltable" groups. But, in addition to these groups there are numerous other ethnic and cultural groups that either live permanently in the United States or come here to work or study for a few months or years. Priti and I are interested in the rich diversity among permanent and temporary residents as well as citizens.

Over the past several years the cultural and ethnic make-up of America has changed dramatically. We are beginning to see the emergence of a minority majority. Not only are the populations increasing among American minority groups but increasing numbers of immigrants are making their way to the United States. The immigration of diverse groups has historically occurred on the coasts in San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York and Boston, or to areas where laborers were needed for special purposes. Nowadays we are seeing growth in the Sun Belt states and particularly movement to the Southwest. At this point we do not yet see

dramatic movement into the state of Utah, but it will come eventually. According to The Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1990 a total of 643,000 immigrants were admitted to the United States in 1988. The largest numbers were recorded from Asia and among those groups Vietnam, China, India, Korea and the Philippines dominated. Other North American groups contributed the second largest number of immigrants: Mexicans, Haitians, Dominicans, and Jamaicans. When we turn our attention to foreign students we discover that 356,000 were admitted in 1988. Again Asia contributed the greatest number to that total: 224,000; Taiwan, India, South Korea, and Japan were the largest groups. The next largest group came from Latin America: 45,000.

I don't want us to focus our attention on immigrants and foreign students and forget about American citizens. The next set of statistics looks at the major American minority groups. It is estimated that by the year 2000 one in three Americans will be nonwhite. The Hispanic population is expected to reach 30 million in the year 2000 (10.8% of the total population) and 46 million in 2020, surpassing the Black population as the largest minority group. The growth rate of Hispanics is five times that of the general population. Mexican Americans are the largest sub group, comprising over 60% of all Hispanic Americans. The Black American population is expected to grow twice as fast as the total U.S. population. The Asian population is expected to total 12 million in 2000 and 20 million in 2020 as compared to 4 million in 1980. In the period from 1980 to 1989 the Asian

American population grew faster than any other major racial or ethnic group. Native Americans comprise less than one percent of the U.S. population. However, there are approximately 200 languages within Native American populations and there are about 500 Indian nations even though census data indicates that over 50% are members of only 10 nations.

Over the past few years the foreign student population at Weber State has maintained a fairly consistent number. However, the nationalities of foreign students shifted from a predominance of Middle Eastern students in 1985 to a predominance of Japanese students in the current academic year. Since 1985 the numbers of countries represented by foreign students here has averaged 41. These students, as well as those from American minority groups, represent a rich cultural diversity that must be encouraged, appreciated, and incorporated in our classes. We cannot assume that our students see things from the same ethnic, cultural, or national perspective and we do them a disservice if we fail to introduce them to the richness around them. Now I will turn the program over to Priti.

II. English 232: Introduction to Fiction

Remember Kathy's remark about finding the "me", I can relate to that very well as I too had to mind "me" among others. When I was a graduate student, it bothered me to encounter a total disregard by my fellow students toward any reference to great works of Indian Literature as a point of comparison or contrast by me to the works of western literature. It seemed that my reference was irrelevant and not worthy of any comments, even in a comparative literature class. I did not take this reaction negatively or as a reflection on me personally. I internalized it as their lack of exposure to Indian Literature and their insensitivity toward other cultures and literatures. Years later when I started to teach Introduction to Literature and Introduction to Fiction classes, I made a secret promise to myself that somehow I will try to expose my students to some of the literary gems scattered around the world. It took some time, research and encouragement to come up with a plan of cultural assimilation in my Introduction to Fiction class. I want to thank Dr. Seshachari, my Department Chair, for his "open-mindedness" in allowing me to explore these new avenues in our themes and ideas courses and for letting me teach Introduction to Fiction courses with "International Emphasis."

I feel it is very important to use this approach in our introductory classes for two reasons. first, look at the enrollment in our English classes. At W.S.U. there are 197 English majors this year and 6285 students who take our

introductory classes. If one wants to reach the multitudes, one needs to reach the students who appear in English classes for a few fleeting quarters by the decree of "required" courses. Second, the English majors do have a choice to take a world literature class offered by our department.

With this background information I want to outline some of the problems, processes, and pleasures of teaching this course. I will share my approach, group assignment and some views on course evaluations.

Problem number one was to find a suitable anthology as in an introductory course my students will not appreciate buying eight to ten different books. It does not require much research to find that most anthologies still emphasize the accepted literary canons. Less than 5% of these is devoted to works of writers other than Anglo/American writers. Thanks to new approaches in teaching all over the country, I did find an anthology The Story and Its Writer ed. by Ann Charters which has stories from more than ten different countries and by many women and non-white ethnic writers. There are many other newer anthologies available now. A list of possible selections is also provided if you wish to look at them.

As I approach this class, i try to keep in mind that it is a 200 level Humanities course and most students come from different disciplines, so I do not over emphasize the literary jargon, rather I perpetuate the notion of enjoying the literature first, then explain, interpret and criticize it. With this in mind, I

select about 20-22 stories very carefully that represent different cultures, countries, and ethnic groups. Like Latin American, Native American, Afro-American, Asian American, French, German, Japanese and Indian writers. Everyone has to read them, and we discuss them at length in class; I provide as much background information about the cultures and ethnic groups as time permits, enough to have them the tools to unlock the cultural mysteries and enigmas. By reading their stories we get a taste of the internationalism in literature. Despite encountering different names, diverse settings and multiple cultural implications, students visualize the common human conditions and realize the universal nature of our global society. They start to appreciate the cultural "melting pot" by separating its ingredients and begin to admire the cultural "rainbow" with all its beautiful colors. This prepares them for their next multicultural assignment. The one which is the major component of my approach in this class, and that is a group research project both written and oral.

I select at least six groups based on different literatures of the world--i.e. French, German, Japanese, Latin American, Afro-American, Native American etc. When I pass the sign-on sheet in class, I ask students to select the group they want to do in-depth research. They can add any other group if 4-5 people are interested in it. Thus the class is divided in six/seven groups--each group consisting of five or six group members. One class period is devoted to explain the requirements, scope and

purpose of this project. I provide some handouts explaining some possibilities and points to keep in mind and allow them to decide within their group who wants to research what aspect of the literary group. They exchange names, phone numbers and their schedules so that they can decide when and where to get together to work on this project. Some meet in the U.B., some at a group member's home, some at a pizza place but soon they come up with a consensus about dividing the different cultural areas. They need to coordinate, organize and plan their research in their own time before presenting it to class during the last week of the quarter. As you can guess, the whole project needs to be handled very carefully to avoid frustration and apprehensions, I do not spend more than two class periods for this assignment, the rest of the help and advising is done during my office hours, I like to keep close watch on student's progress by checking some of their plans and by providing some bibliographies and books related to their group research. So far I have not encountered any group that resisted this assignment except one group where students found it very hard to coordinate with each other due to their class and work schedules. After initial confusion and chaos, most groups enjoy working together and getting to know each other outside the classroom. They develop a group dynamic team spirit that is a very useful quality and worth while experience in any work place.

The second stage is presentation of the report to the class. Each writer presents her/his segment from the report. Visual

aids or any other props like maps, picture post cards, art objects and sometimes authentic foods and music of the region are brought by the group members. I discourage them to read their written report in its entirety to save time; as each group gets 20-25 minutes to present the research. There is a short question answer and discussion time after each presentation. Students use creative ways to make their groups report more interesting. One group dressed up in period costumes and presented the whole research in autobiographical form. It was very enjoyable and innovative. Another group brought the slides from their chosen country. They read their reports in complete darkness using only small flashlights. As all of us viewed beautiful slides we heard their reports that coincided with the pictures. Geographic maps help others put the particular region in perspective and political, religious, social and historical information project the literary trends and major works in correct perspective. I also encourage group members to interview some one from that particular region if they can, and bring out some personal experience if they have visited the country and know the language too. Sometimes there are some foreign students in the class or some students who have lived in some foreign countries (mostly returned missionaries). They bring in some personal experiences to enhance the understanding of that area's culture and add important insights to the project.

I feel by presenting and by listening to these reports, all students gain some understanding of a different ethnic group and

their culture. The abstract foreign, far away, lands become concrete realities and the strange customs and traditions of varied cultures begin to transform into some cognitive theories. Even though each group does in-depth research on one area only, by listening to each report, all get the benefit of learning about other groups. The attendance during this activity is mandatory; they actually loose points for not showing up on class. A short list of famous authors and their works from each area is also provided for all students.

Grading of this assignment is divided in three parts. This assignment is worth 20% of the final grade and each writer and presenter gets individual grade on his/her part of the written report. In addition, 5% of the grade is from the group members themselves rating each member's contribution, cooperation and participation in completing this assignment. It gets a little complicated but it is fair, very democratic and works rather well. I have still not found the perfect grading system, but the point system that I am using presently is quite satisfying to me. I have a handout of my grading system if you wish to see it.

The project, after the class presentation, is compiled and given to me. Some sample reports are on display for you to peruse. The final exam for this class is comprehensive and I include some pertinent questions in the final based on the knowledge and understanding of cultural and literary research each group has done.

One might wonder about the significance and impact of this

research activity on literature, but my experience confirms that during the process of discovering "others", like Kathy said, we discover "ourselves", hopefully without any shortcuts of prejudices and unreliable inductive leap I can find "me". By analyzing the diversity and uniqueness of other cultural and ethnic groups we unlock the mysteries of our own values and learn the art of putting social norms in their cultural and literary contexts. Our minds are "opened" to different ways and we acquire the ability to appreciate the multicolored quilt comprised of multicultures instead of focusing on ethnocentrism. It is like having a kaleidoscopic view of our world rather than having a telescopic, myopic outlook on literature and life. It encourages us to reconsider the metaphor of the "melting pot"-not like a soup bowl-but like a pot of stew where all ingredients retain their individual shape and identity and still enhance the taste of the dish.

Some of my student comments confirm my assertions and expectations. I receive many positive comments like these about this project in my student evaluations. Students develop a new sensitivity toward being different and being foreign. Their minds are able to imagine the culturalally diverse responses to common human conditions, and finally they are equipped to discern the real meanings of these literary works and appreciate them without cultural biases.

This project combined with my overall approach to include diversity in selecting the stories, and two written response

papers on these stories, in some ways brings some "international emphasis" to my Introduction to Fiction class. It certainly fulfills my desire to follow the less beaten path and explore new avenues in teaching literature and creating an awareness of multicultural nature of our world.

Allen A. Schneider and Mary F. Crum substantiate my approach when they say, "A strong international perspective would add much to what we need to know and understand about our own internal cultural character and our own diverse cultural character provides an ideal vehicle for improving our knowledge and understanding of the rest of the world" (18).

In this complex world of ours this approach to introductory literature courses seems to be a useful tool to know and find the real "me".

III. English 111: College Writing

It is my belief that as educators, indeed, as responsible citizens, we must be knowledgeable about and "willing to accommodate not only a diversity of origins but a diversity of views" (Sobol 28). In order to do that we must know more about how different cultural groups see the world, how they make sense of their experiences, and why they behave as they do. We want to avoid Ellwood P. Cubberly's view which he so clearly expressed in 1909 when he wrote, "Everywhere these people [immigrants] tend to settle in groups or settlements, and to set up here their national manners, customs, and observances. Our task is to break up these groups or settlements, to assimilate and amalgamate these people as a part of our American race, and to implant in their children, so far as can be done, the Anglo-Saxon conception of righteousness, law and order, and popular government, and to awaken in them a reverence for our democratic institutions and for those things...which we as a people hold to be of abiding worth." My personal goal is for my students to realize that their way, the Utah way, or the American way, (whatever that is) is not the only way. Thomas Sobol writes it is "only through exploring our diverse roots and branches can we fully comprehend the whole. Only by respecting our differences can we become one society. Only by understanding our diversity can we apprehend our common humanity" (28).

When I introduce multicultural issues to my writing students

I begin by showing slides of various countries where I have lived or visited. My purpose is to show my students what places look like, how people dress, how goods are transported, what schools are like, how houses are constructed, how shopping gets done, and so on. Sibel Cakmah expresses this very clearly when she said "the more alternate cultural schemas people possess, the better they will become at making mental shifts toward intercultural understanding" (4). I want them to realize that cultural understanding goes beyond language and religion; it involves the fabric of our daily lives. I want them to be aware that "culture controls behavior in deep and persisting ways, many of which are outside of awareness and therefore, beyond conscious control of the individual" (Padgett 3). I want them to know that there are many and varied ways to do the routines of our lives. I show them pictures of high rise apartment blocks in Shanghai and tiny kitchens shared by three or four families. They see picture of pharmacists preparing traditional Chinese herbal medicines. I show them pictures of patients receiving acupuncture treatments. They see Haitian village women balancing their produce in huge baskets on their heads. They see the modern skyline of Dubai in contrast with the ancient wooden dhows that are still used for fishing and transport on the Persian Gulf. At this point my students and I spend a great deal of time discussing what they have seen in the slides; answering questions about customs, sharing personal reactions to new and different, and perhaps, frustrating experiences.

The second step in preparing my students for the readings and ultimately for the assignment is to discuss the phenomena of culture shock. I explain the social and psychological stages of culture shock and we make comparisons to our own experiences. We talk about the exhilaration of the "honeymoon" stage which is replaced by the frustration and depression of homesickness and then moves to acceptance and adaptation. If there are students in the class from other countries they are always eager to share their personal stories. The focus of our discussion is cultural adjustment: what is it like to get used to new ways, foods, sights, customs, schedules.

The actual writing assignment requires students to write an expository essay about the cultural adjustment of someone who was not born in the United States. They are to interview this person to find out about their experiences in adjusting to life in the United States. The I always make arrangements with the ESL department to send my students to ESL classes to meet international students. Some of my students are able to contact individuals at church, work, in their family, or in their neighborhood. But, some of them have no contact at all with foreign born citizens or residents. By making contact with fellow students in a classroom setting some of the barriers of nervousness or embarrassment are alleviated. ESL teachers are always eager to help because this provides an opportunity for their students to spend time with native English speakers.

Readings accompany each of my writing assignments

regardless of genre or topic. I use them as a way of focusing class discussion, providing models of organization, springboards for idea and topic development, and samples of writing styles. In the case of this paper on cultural adjustment I usually assign four readings which vary from quarter to quarter depending on student choice, my personal choice, and general readability and overall success. I always include personal narratives as well as sociological or historical pieces. For the most recent assignment I used a descriptive piece written by a Greek student, a personal narrative by an Iranian American, a general sociological descriptive piece about the four major American minority groups, and a specific research report about the initial educational program delivered to Vietnamese immigrants. These readings are all very different and encourage a wide range of student responses. They also provide ideas for interview topics that might have otherwise been overlooked.

You will probably not be surprised to learn that my students are usually quite nervous when making their first contact with their interviewee. They wonder about their ability to conduct an interview: how will they get the information they need without being pushy? What if their informant is nervous also? How can they convince their informant that they won't be offended by honest opinions or reactions. We spend considerable class time discussing and practicing interviewing strategies.

After the first contact--some students meet with their subjects several times--most of the students are surprised at the

perceptions foreigners may have toward things they take for granted: slang, jokes, fast food, courtesy and etiquette for example. It is at this time that my students begin to make the connections between their reading and the concrete experiences their subjects have had. It is one thing to read about confusion with slang but quite another to hear an Armenian woman laugh about the ridiculousness of the expression "pulling your leg" and trying to figure out what it actually means. It is one thing to read about the geographic illiteracy of Americans and quite another to confess to a foreign student that you don't know the capital of her country.

As the students start their drafting and revising process they begin to feel very protective of their subjects. For some of them this is the first time they have even seen their lives through the eyes of a different culture. One student wrote in a his journal, "I now know that in some cases I have to change my thoughts about foreigners." Another student remarked, "I don't want him to look like some unnatural human, but I want to make him look good. In other words, I want him to look courageous without overdoing it. Because in my mind he is, I can't imagine me moving to Thailand and learning their language, customs, etc. I don't know how well I would do. I don't think I would do very well." A third student said, "Now I understand better what immigrants are treated like and how we as Americans put ourselves across or how other people see us." While they write my students begin to discover the "me", not only in themselves but in their

informants. A gradual awareness of themselves and others begins to take place. By the time they have finished their essays they understand the complexities of cultural adjustment.

I have a very modest goal in making this assignment and that is to introduce my students to the cultural diversity around them. This is a popular assignment in my English 111 class. It gives my students the opportunity to discuss other views, experiences and perspectives. One student expressed his reaction quite well when he said, "Because of this assignment I have learned more about another culture. I appreciate other cultures and how they are different. I don't think I was prejudiced, just ignorant." This assignment is a small step toward overcoming ignorance.

IV. Conclusion

Kathy mentioned the play "Melting Pot" by Isreal Zangwill, I hope the myth and false assumptions of our nation as "melting pot of culture" proposed in the play should be obvious to all educated and open minded people in our democratic society. The whole concepts of assimilation and homogenization were never actually taken seriously and were never measured, obtained or even entertained seriously. William Hunter, while editing a multicultural/pluralistic education compilation for American Association of College Teacher Education, clarifies that "cultural melting pot "was never intended to melt all ethnic and cultural groups."...it rejects as unmeltable many ethnic groups, including Native Americans, Blacks, Spanish Speakers, and Orientals. The concept assumes that only the dominant white Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture was worth saving, and it was expected that those who wished to be absorbed by the melting pot had to surrender their own cultural heritage as the price of admission. (12). Indeed this price was not only too high to pay but also totally unacceptable for many individuals. A distinct voice among them is of Walt Whitman, the celebrated American poet who cries out "I hear America singing, its varied carols I hear." He heard the colorful cultural symphony of our nation and celebrated the richness that cultural diversity brings in our lives. It should not take too long for the rest of us to realize the joys of living in a pluralistic society and to entertain the healthy respect and pride for people of ethnically and culturally

diverse groups. Early 1960's-70's saw the emergence of multicultural and pluralistic educational programs in our schools on the basis of the ideals that being different is not necessarily being inferior, that people can be different and equal at the same time, and that being culturally different is not being culturally deprived.

If we as educators accept these ideals of cultural pluralism, I feel compelled to reconsider the definition of culture clearly before entertaining the notion of cultural diversity. Even though all human beings are born with more or less same biological equipment and undergo similar life experiences of birth, aging, illness and death, culture is the factor that imposes order and relevant meanings to these experiences. As Educator James A. Macdonald maintains, "on the broadest level culture tends to be related to or defined as the symbolic universe of a group of persons. In this sense it refers to the meanings people attach to relationships to self and others, to humankind's extensions..., to institutions, ideas and other groups of people and to each human's relations to cosmic circumstances" (8).

As Kathy pointed out about the make up of our multiethnic society, all of us can assess the damage done by ethnocentrism that prevailed and still continues to prevail in our American society. The conventional view known as WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) being the hosts and all others as being guests--sometimes welcome and other times not so welcome--still generates

curiosity and questions about the people with distinct biological markings like slanting eyes, pale or darker color of skin and black hair. "When did you come here? Why did you come here? How do you like it here?" "How did you learn to speak English?" are commonly asked questions. Even if the "different" person has lived in this country and culture for three or four generations, the pigmentation and biological differences are sometimes hard to melt.

In recent years we hear more and more about culture. E. D. Hirsch, Jr.'s book Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know paints a gloomy picture of our college graduates who fail to recognize the most basic and fundamental terminology of our culture. Allan Bloom's book The Closing of the American Minds complains about the shortcomings of our contemporary educational system and lures us to the more simpler times of true learning--the essential learning of the three "Rs". While acknowledging their efforts for bringing our attentions to these basic issues, I want to suggest that their views are somewhat simplistic and shortsighted. On the other hand, I feel Simonson and Walker, the editors of Graywolf's Annual on Multicultural Literacy, state their positions on this issue very accurately when they say, "At a time when one in four Americans are people of color, none of us can afford to remain ignorant of the heritage and culture of any part of our population" (41).

This reconfirms my assertion that we should not only start the race, like Hirsch and Bloom do by pointing out the lack of

cultural awareness in our society, but we should also make certain that it does not end before reaching the finish line. Hirsch confuses the issue by creating his own finish line, by conjuring up unfortunate cultural boundaries, by closing the half open gates and by mesmerizing our minds into another ignoble slumber of close-mindedness. To suggest that educated people need to know about their own heritage is well intentioned, but to ascertain that the quest of knowledge stops within the bounds of our nation is, in my opinion, lacking boldness and insight.

The world we live in may start with our home, family and nation, but it certainly does not end there. It crosses the oceans, climbs the mountains and scales the skies of this universe of our which has literally become a "global village". We not only need to understand and accept our cultural pluralism and its immense contributions to our society, but we also need to expand our awareness to the cultures of the world. This notion takes us beyond multicultural education to humanistic education to create more concerned citizens and to reorder our educational priorities. Arno G. Preller echoes my sentiments when he declares, "It is a matter of survival that we build bridges of communication. We need dialogue, understanding and end of isolation." (72)

The Carnegie Task Force on teaching also suggests that it is necessary to "rebuild" our educational system to meet the changes of our global society. They mention an interesting fact that the major TV networks N.B.C., A.B.C., and C.B.S. devote over half of

their time to items with international dimensions, yet one study done by Mark R. Levy et.al. found listeners able to understand the major points of only one third of the items to which they listened. This shows that our communication and informational systems have outrun our educational systems (as quoted by "The Study of Commission on Global Education and Its Report" (12). This report is trying to outline what students need to learn in order to function as useful citizens of the United States as an independent nation in an inter-dependent world. It defines the global education very emphatically, "By global perspective, we mean that effective citizens must have knowledge and understanding of the world beyond our borders...its people, nations, cultures, systems and problems; knowledge of how the world affects us and knowledge of how we affect the world" (Robert H. Hanveytd by "the study---." (12). The present Gulf War is a prime example of human interconnectedness and it underscores the urgency of such global education.

Educator James Macdonald recommends that we need to recommit ourselves to, "one projected format for cultural pluralism [that project] concerns redefining goals in broad holistic terms, providing an environment which allows for activity in the community in interdisciplinary study with special interest and need centers, and with full participation in the school community, all evolving out of the close personal relationships with knowledgeable, helping adults" (13). After acknowledging the multicultural and multiethnic nature of our world, we will

lay the cornerstones of true democratic education and will illuminate the shining (ideals) of "equality and justice for all."

Donna Gullnick points out an important characteristic of culture as a learned behavior through socialization. The culture of one's birth is totally meaningless unless one socializes in that same culture. Culture is also adaptation to one's environmental conditions and thus it is a dynamic system subject to changes forged by geographic, economic and technologic components ("Multicultural Education in a Pluralistic Society," 10). (Especially) if we agree that the sensitivity and cultural awareness are learned behaviors, not genetic predisposition, then the responsibility of "opening the mind" rests upon the nurturers and educators of these minds and souls. We, as parents, and we, as teachers and coaches, need to assume that burden and stand up to the demanding challenges.

Examining how different people and cultures respond to common problems under different circumstances should lead students to understand and appreciate diversity. One way to examine and study this would be to travel to foreign lands and observe the reactions and responses of the people like most social and cultural anthropologists do. Another much easier and less economically draining method is to read literature from other cultures which records and recounts the frustrations and joys of their individual and communal responses to diverse situations. This is the basis of my undertaking, and my

contribution and solution to the gigantic issue of "cultural awareness and opening of the American minds." Hopefully by becoming more aware of the "others" our students will be able to know the real "me" they are looking for.

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